

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 201 533

CE 026 879

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TITLE Project on Adult Education Opportunities in Industrialized Countries. Executive Summary.  
INSTITUTION Educational Testing Service, Berkeley, Calif.  
SPONS AGENCY National Center for Education Statistics (DEEW), Washington, D.C.  
SUB DATE Sep 80  
CONTRACT 300-73-0369  
NOTE 12p.; For a related document see CE 026 880.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.  
DESCRIPTORS \*Adult Education; \*Adult Programs; Adults; Comparative Analysis; \*Developed Nations; \*Educational Opportunities; \*Educational Policy; Educational Practices; Entry Workers; Females; National Programs; Older Adults; Parents; Policy; Program Descriptions; \*Program Effectiveness; Public Policy; State of the Art Reviews; Australia; Canada; Denmark; France; Sweden; United Kingdom; United States; West Germany  
IDENTIFIERS

ABSTRACT

This executive summary sets forth the findings from a study of adult education opportunities and policies in industrialized countries. Focus of the project is on programs for workers, older persons, women entering the labor force, parents, and undereducated adults in nine countries, including Australia, Canada, Denmark, the Federal Republic of Germany, France, the Soviet Union, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The report consists of five sections. The first two sections contain information on the background of the study and the contents and organization of the project report. A brief outline of the adult education policies, programs, and opportunities in the nine countries covered in the report is provided in section 3. Section 4 contains descriptions of reports by country consultants on the state of adult education in their respective countries. The final section presents a discussion of the implications of these programs for government policy in the United States, with special emphasis on the areas of the educational needs of workers, older persons, women entering the work force, parent education, and under-educated adults. \*\*\*

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ED201833

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NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF  
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PROJECT ON ADULT EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES IN INDUSTRIALIZED COUNTRIES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

September 1980  
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By  
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Background. New policies and programs for adult education, recurrent training, and lifelong learning are being debated and implemented in many countries throughout the world, including the United States. Reflecting Congressional intent in 1974 Education Amendments to study educational practices in foreign countries that may be potentially applicable in the U.S., NCES staff determined that a review of adult education opportunities in a number of industrialized nations could be instructive for adult education policies and programs in this country. This report sets forth the findings from that study.

While the study was comprehensive in scope, it gave particular attention--as specified in NCES's Request for Proposals--to programs for workers, older persons, women entering the labor force, parents, and undereducated adults. The nine countries covered in the study, also specified by NCES, included Australia, Canada, Denmark, the Federal Republic of Germany, France, the Soviet Union, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

Project Report.\*\* The report from the project is in two volumes.

Volume One contains an Introduction and three Parts:

- The Introduction provides material on the background and purpose of

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\*Conducted for the National Center for Education Statistics under Contract No. 300-79-0369.

\*\*Peterson, R. E., Helmick, J. S., Valley, J. R., Gaff, S. S., Feldmesser, R. A., and Neilsen, H. D. Adult Education Opportunities in Nine Industrialized Countries. Princeton, N.J.: Educational Testing Service, 1980.

the study, definitions of principal concepts, various information-gathering activities carried out during the project, and an outline of the structure of the two-volume report.

- Part I consists of overviews of major adult education policies and programs in the nine countries. Each concludes with a table that gives participation estimates for the various programs.

- Part II reviews in some detail programs in each of the nine countries directed toward the five designated subpopulations: workers, older persons, women entering the labor force, parents, and undereducated adults.

- Part III considers ideas and implications for government policy in the U.S. in the field of adult education. Some 30 implications are drawn. A comparative table giving total adult education participation estimates is also given.

Volume Two is in two Parts:

- Part IV consists of reports by the eight country consultants who aided the project.

- Part V is a list of all the documents obtained and used during the study, organized by country.

Major Adult Education Developments

Among the adult education policies, programs and opportunities in the nine countries described in the report are the following:

Australia: External and continuing education programs in both the

universities and the colleges of advanced education, the Technical and Further Education (TAFE) institutions, apprenticeship training, programs for Aboriginals and immigrants, the National Employment and Training (NEAT) scheme, the 1977 recommendations of the ~~Adams~~ Committee of Inquiry into Education and Training, the ~~tin~~ University ~~based~~ entirely on external study concepts), and the program of the Victoria Council of Adult Education.

Canada: Part-time and continuing education opportunities at the 72 university campuses, the 200 community colleges, adult programs of the local school boards, correspondence education, Frontier College, the Canada Manpower Training Program (and its several basic skill training schemes), the comprehensive National Plan of Action on the Status of Women, the 1979 recommendations of the ~~Adams~~ Commission of Inquiry on Educational Leave and Productivity, the New Horizons program for retired Canadians, and numerous innovations in the Provinces: Athabasca University in Alberta and the Tele-University in Quebec (both based on distance education concepts), Saskatchewan's network of ~~extensive~~ regional colleges for continuing education, the Local Further Education Councils in Alberta, and Quebec's SEAPAC, for example.

Denmark: The 80 Folk High Schools, the study circles (sponsored by the 20 "Organizations for Popular Enlightenment"), the local Evening Schools, various Labor Market Training Schemes (for training semi-skilled workers, retraining skilled workers, and "reconversion training" in new skills for which there is ~~greater~~ demand), the College of Municipal Administration, the four Pensioners' Folk High Schools, the 1960 Act on Vocational Training, and the 1967 Act on Leisure-Time Instruction.

The Federal Republic of Germany: The well-known Volkshochschulen (literally, people's high schools), the Vocational Education Act, the Federal Labor Promotion Act, paid educational leave (PEL) plans in several of the Länder (States), civil servants' right to take negotiated trade union courses, the role of the ~~churches~~ in general adult education, the Distance (correspondence) University and the Funkakademie (a radio consortium).

France: The milestone 1973 Law on Continuing Vocational Training (making continuing education a national obligation and paid educational leave a right for all workers), expanding informal "system" of "socio-cultural animation," the new adult-oriented Université Institutes of Technology, the multiple-purpose universites du Troisième Age, the Clubs des Anciens, the Centre National de Tele-Enseignement, the Pactes pour l'Emploi, creation in 1978 of the post of Secretary of State for Women's Employment, the work of the National Union of Family Associations, various educational opportunities for foreigners, and the educational programs of local Chambers of Commerce and Industry.

The Soviet Union: The national policy of 10th grade completion--through a national system of extramural (correspondence) and shift (evening) courses, evening and extramural programs of higher education institutions as well as the "preparatory departments" at many of them, the policy of formal training as a requirement for worker advancement (and the wide availability of tuition-free vocational training programs), opportunities for paid leave, Znanie (The Knowledge Society) and the 40,000 People's Universities (a number of which are "Universities for Parents").

Sweden: The relatively extensive government financial support for adult education, the well-known and widely attended study circles--sponsored by the voluntary education associations in Sweden--the Folk High Schools, Labor market Training systems to quickly counteract labor shortages, the extensive firm-conducted job training, grants for training handicapped workers, guaranteed training leaves, subsidized basic skills education and the work of the Municipal Adult Schools, the educational work of the two national pensioners' organizations, and the "outreach" (recruitment) efforts in factories and housing areas.

The United Kingdom: The basic responsibility of the Local Education Authorities (LEAs) to provide adult education opportunities, the Colleges of Further Education (which mostly enroll youths of age 16 to 19), the Polytechnics, the residential colleges (for adults), university extramural (extension) programs, the Open University, activities of the Workers' Educational Association, the work of the 23 Industrial Training Boards, the Training Opportunities Scheme (TOPS) which provides for paid year-long training for a new job, the Wider Opportunities for Women (WOW) courses, the notable adult literacy campaign of 1975-78 and the current Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit, and the programs of the Pre-Retirement Association of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

The United States: The federal Adult Education Act of 1966 and the adult basic education (ABE) programs conducted chiefly by local school districts, the Department of Agriculture's Cooperative Extension Service, the diverse CETA activities (including the new Private Sector Initiative)--mostly designed for marginally employable youths, training opportunities in

government service, the federally-mandated school-based programs with ancillary activities for parents (e.g., Head Start), the over 900 community colleges with their hundreds of thousands of part-time adult students, college and university continuing education, the Elderhostel movement, programs of the American Association of Retired Persons, industry- and professional association-sponsored training, the work of the voluntary literacy organizations, the great variety of educational opportunities provided by local community organizations, and the reality of extensive local initiatives--public and private--on behalf of adult learners in the U.S.

Reports by Country Consultants

Australia. Chris Duke, Director of the Centre for Continuing Education at the Australian National University, comments on the meanings of adult education in Australia, the lack of statistical data, national and State policies, varying State structures and programs, and concludes by noting the generally undeveloped retraining and continuing education situation in the country.

Canada. Ralph J. Clark and Donald H. Brundage of the Department of Adult Education at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, provide a very comprehensive account of current programs in Canada--both national and in the Provinces. They also describe specific programs for workers, older adults, women entering the labor force, parents, and undereducated adults.

Denmark. Poul-Erik Kandrup, of the Danish Adult Education Council, after first giving a description of modern Danish society, provides information on adult education participation and then critically reviews major national policies and programs--including their history, definitions, responsibility, potential audiences, financing, and major problems.

The Federal Republic of Germany. Helmuth Dolff, Director of the German Volkshochschul-Verbandes, first outlines the statutory bases for and the important providers of adult education in the F.R.G. He then describes the Volkshochschule as the central public institution for adult education in the country, including notes on general purposes, content offerings, financing, and demands and problems. Preliminary comments on the new educational leave policies in effect in five states are also offered.

France. Pierre Besnard and Bernard Lietard, of the Universite Rene Descartes, focus their analysis on the system of socio-cultural "animation" in France. After placing this "socio-cultural or voluntary subsystem" in the larger context of adult education in France, the authors describe the generally informal organizational settings for animation (natural groups, voluntary associations, local communities, regional structures) and then describe the characteristics, activities, and increasing professionalization of individuals who work as "animateurs." They conclude with comments on the role of the French government in the "socio-cultural subsystem."

The Soviet Union. Seymour M. Rosen, the U.S. Department of Education's specialist on Soviet education, describes the heterogeneous Soviet

society and its educational history; current adult education policy as stated in national legislation; major programs, including elementary-secondary evening schools and correspondence programs, higher education evening and correspondence programs, and special programs for workers, women, parents, and undereducated adults; Znanie and the People's Universities; and concludes with comments on strengths and weakness of adult education in the U.S.S.R.

Sweden. Kjell Rubenson, of the Stockholm Institute of Education, discusses the history of adult education in Sweden, current policy (which has shifted from economic development in the 1960s to equity in the 1970s), financing, major forms--Folk High Schools, study circles (sponsored by the ten voluntary educational associations), municipal adult schools, labor market training, the 25:4 qualification for higher education, and others--and concludes with critical comments on the effectiveness of the current national policy of equity directed at disadvantaged and undereducated adults in Sweden.

The United Kingdom. Arthur Stock, Director of the National Institute of Adult Education (England and Wales), begins with a general overview and then provides an extended historical account as well as a summary of present legal bases for adult education in the U.K. He goes on to describe the adult education work of the Local Education Authorities, the Universities, the Open University, and the Workers' Educational Association and other voluntary associations. He reviews special programs for the five population groups specified for the study, the adult literacy campaign, the quality of available statistics, and closes with comments on future trends

in adult education in the U.K.

Implications for Government Policy in the U.S.

This section of the report first acknowledges the realities of cultural differences, diverse educational philosophies, and political feasibility. It then comments on problems encountered in attempting to assemble comparative statistics on adult education participation; this notwithstanding, a table is presented that gives estimates of total participation for the nine countries. The U.S. was judged to have the third highest rate among the nine countries studied--27 percent, behind the Soviet Union and Sweden.

Issues and alternatives for a national policy on adult education in the United States are discussed. General purposes of national policies in a number of foreign countries in the past several decades are described. The general goal of equity was judged to be appropriate for a federal policy on adult education in the U.S., in part because when provision is left to local organizations (as it mostly is) participants from the upper classes tend to be heavily overrepresented. It was suggested that the policy be comprehensive in its goals (for both individuals and the society), types of provider agencies embraced, and populations served, but that responsibility for implementation be lodged in local communities (precisely, in local cooperative councils).

A key element in a comprehensive adult education policy is a comprehensive manpower training or human resources development policy, which provides for training services in principle available to all adults. Most

of the countries included in the study have such opportunities. Indeed, the U.S. was found to be far behind other industrialized nations in systematically providing training opportunities for workers and potential workers.

- More specifically for workers, implications centered on the need for the concept of paid educational leave for all workers (not just college professors) to be seriously considered in this country, the need for training opportunities available to essentially all adults who wish to change jobs, and the need for a mechanism enabling rapid training for regional labor market shortages.
- With regard to older persons, implications dealt with the need for consciousness-raising concerning the value of continued learning to older people, the need for more and larger national advocacy organizations of older people, and experimentation in the U.S. with the French University for the Third Age model for multiple services to older people.
- Concerning women entering the labor force, the situation is far from ideal in the U.S. because of the same lack of universally accessible training opportunities considered earlier, and the lack of a national childcare system (which virtually all industrialized nations have).
- The general conclusions regarding parent education are that the U.S., with its plethora of private and public (mostly elementary school-based) programs, has progressed beyond most other countries, and furthermore, that any national policy on parent education would be inadvisable in the pluralistic U.S. society. (None of the countries studied have such policies.)

• Compared to some countries--notably Sweden, and perhaps Canada--the U.S. is far from adequately meeting the learning needs of its undereducated adults. Implications in the report focus on incentives to private firms to provide basic skills instruction for their employees, improvement of CETA's (or its successor's) basic skills training, expanded involvement of churches and other community organizations in basic skills work, federal financing for the major voluntary literacy organizations, and--after suitable groundwork--a multi-organizational national literacy campaign (along the lines of the British campaign).